

Bishop's Customary

W. Jay Lambert, Sixth Bishop of Eau Claire

Preface

The liturgical practices of priests are shaped by the seminaries they attended and the times in which they were students. The practices have much variation. Liturgy for deacons, priests, and bishops is holy work. Those in ordained ministry have invested much in their particular practices. Because they are working with the holy, clergy are and should be resistant to changes. As bishop I want to respect clergy differences. At the same time, it is my responsibility to establish some measure of standardization. Below are some of the liturgical practices I want for the Diocese of Eau Claire:

Children and Communion

Baptism is full citizenship in the Body of Christ. The Holy Eucharist nourishes (feeds) Baptism. The Eucharist always holds elements of mystery—we don't completely understand it. We expect children to be quiet when many cannot read the service or sing the lyrics. Many don't understand sermons, even children's sermons. Finally when there is something they do understand, eating and drinking, we should let them participate. As baptized citizens of the kingdom, it is their right. Children nearly always understand what is holy. They come and receive communion with respect. Some children have told me it is the main reason they come to church.

If parents don't want their children receiving Communion clergy should respect this. Also a child who is "out of sorts" and not respecting Communion should not be receiving. I have found this behavior to be rare. I want children to receive Communion the day they are baptized and always thereafter. At an age that is appropriate, perhaps around third grade, I hope the clergy will have Early Communion classes. These are times that allow children to reflect upon a practice in which they have participated for some time. It also gives them a special time to relate to the clergy in a direct manner. Instruction should look at receiving Communion and the meaning of Communion and Baptism. Also, this is a time to help children to learn about vestments, Communion vessels and linens. Early Communion classes are excellent opportunities to recruit acolytes.

Reserve Sacrament

The Reserve Sacrament is intended to take Communion to the sick or to shut-ins. It also is useful when a deacon leads a Sunday service where no priest is available. When there is a celebration of the Eucharist, the people should receive bread and wine that has been consecrated in that particular service. They should not receive from the Reserve Sacrament. If a priest has consecrated an inadequate number of wafers or insufficient wine, use the rubric on page 408 of the Prayer Book and is reprinted in the Missal to consecrate new elements. The priest or deacon should insure that the tabernacle or aumbry is not overflowing with wafers or wine. Wine should be drunk or poured down a piscina or on to the ground outside. Bread should be eaten.

Variation of Eucharistic Prayers

Our Prayer Book has six Eucharistic Prayers. My hope is that every member of the Diocese of Eau Claire will be familiar with all of them. With the exception of a wedding, funeral, or special day such as Maundy Thursday, Clergy should not “hop” Eucharistic Prayers meaning altering them every week. Instead they should be the same for a season or several weeks. This allows the people to develop a knowledge of each Prayer. My hope is that our people can attend an Episcopal service anywhere in the United States and have a familiarity with that congregation’s worship. I also encourage you to use Enriching Our Worship Prayers 1 and 2. They are theologically strong alternatives.

Celebration of Communion

Priests have varying patterns for celebrating Communion. I have no intention of altering those preferences. There is one area that I ask every celebrant to observe. If you are in the orans position (hands extended) and need to turn a page of the Missal you bring your hands together against your body. You next reach with the left hand to turn the page. Once you have done this bring your left hand to be with the right hand next to your body. Then resume the orans position. Do not leave your right hand hanging alone in the air while you turn the page with your left hand. There is no half-orans position. Both hands are out or both are together against your body.

Regular Sundays and Special Sundays

Liturgies should be low key for regular Sundays of the Church year. These are times for instruction and when potentially controversial topics are appropriate. Special Sundays or holidays are different. Liturgically they should be feasts for the senses. I want our people to sense the majesty of our Anglo-Catholic heritage in these high holy day services. On these occasions people have traditional expectations. It is right to honor where our people are. This is not the time for controversy. I have learned this lesson the hard way. I once had a full program regarding prevention of domestic violence as part of an adult class on Mother’s Day. This was not a good idea. It proved very upsetting to some people, and I had my share of pastoral work afterward.

Visitations

If I am visiting with a congregation and a priest is present, I expect that person to lead the service through The Peace. I will preach and say the Absolution to the General Confession. I will celebrate the Eucharist. Deacons will function where directed in the Prayer Book. After the service I like to greet the people and then gather up my vestments and take them to my car. I am not leaving! I then join the people in the parish hall. It is helpful if you can email me a bulletin prior to my visitation. I ask that you indicate in the bulletin that all plate offering (cash) collected on the date of the visitation will go to a particular local outreach the congregation has designated. Clergy should have available any liturgical records for me to see. These would include service register, baptismal, confirmation, marriage, and burial records. I am available if the congregation desires a discussion time with me after the services.

Confirmations

There is no minimum age for someone to be confirmed in the Diocese of Eau Claire. In some circumstances a person as young as 11 or 12 is ready for confirmation. I have also known 20 year olds who are not ready. The priest who is in charge of the congregation carries the

responsibility of discerning who should be confirmed or not. I want to meet with the confirmands for about an hour before the service begins. Before the service, the clergy need to send me the full names of those being confirmed along with baptism dates.

Marriage

All marriages are to be conducted in accordance with canon law of the Episcopal Church. Title 1: Canon 18 is the Marriage Canon. Clergy are expected to know this canon and observe it. If there are questions of interpretation or special circumstance contact me. If either person being married has divorced and desires to remarry, the clergy and couple are to file a marriage petition for me to permit or deny that the marriage take place. This form can be found on the web site or obtained through the diocesan office.

Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child

This service from page 439 of the Prayer Book is especially helpful when a child is born, and the family has not yet left the hospital. I accompany this with a celebration of the Eucharist. Take the time to give a brief homily as part of this service. I also had the custom of using my discretionary fund to purchase a baby gift (usually clothing) to bring to the hospital.

Reconciliation of a Penitent

Private confession is an important part of Christian life. Honor the rubrics on page 446. The location of a confession should be in the church sanctuary or in an office or study. In all cases you should wear a purple stole. Doors should be locked. A priest's office should have a window. It is best for the priest to be seated in full view of a passerby. The penitent should sit where he or she cannot be seen. In normal confessions there is a place in the service calling upon you to provide advice. This discussion should be brief.

The most important part of penance regards the seal of the confessional. Secrecy is a moral absolute. Remember you can go to jail over this. It is to be followed. Once you hear a confession and the session is concluded, you cannot return to the conversation with the penitent at a later time unless the penitent initiates the topic. If you hear a confession and fear someone's life may be in danger, you can withhold absolution until the person has taken appropriate action. You are not required to absolve.

It is helpful to say within the context of the confession words to this effect: "You have laid your sin at the base of the cross. Do you want to commit a new sin? Pick it up again and carry it away with you. In so doing you are denying the power of Jesus to take away your sin. You have given it to him. Let him keep it. You are now free. It is for this reason that he died. He died for you and for me. This is one of the most beautiful aspects of our Christian life."

Counseling and Pastoral Care

Unless specifically licensed, clergy do not provide counseling. They do offer pastoral care. There is a difference. A conversation around pastoral care can be in depth but resolution of issues should occur within two sessions. Those receiving pastoral care should know at the

outset what you can and cannot offer. If more work is needed after two sessions, the clergy should refer the person(s) to a licensed mental health professional.

If you sense in any private conversation that a person may take legal or seek disciplinary action falsely against you, write as soon as possible a verbatim account in detail of what happened. Place it in an envelope and seal it. Write on the outside words to this effect: "This is my account of what transpired in conversation between me and _____ on this date at this time. No one has read or will read this document unless action is taken against me." Sign it with the date and time of signing and have a parish secretary, warden, or other parish member witness your signature with his or her signature along with the date and time. Store the document in a safe place.

Healing, Unction, and Extreme Unction

Any person can lay hands on another for healing. Unction, the making of the sign of the cross on the forehead with oil for healing, is normally done by priests or bishops. There is the necessity rubric toward the bottom of page 456 of the Prayer Book that permits a deacon or lay person to anoint a sick person in an emergency.

Extreme Unction is the same use of oil but is done as part of Ministration at the Time of Death—the Book of Common Prayer service found on page 462. The norm is for this service to be done once as part of this person's illness or hospitalization.

A Celebration of Communion or Communion from Reserve Sacrament can be administered immediately after Extreme Unction. Notice the rubric at the bottom of page 457 of the Prayer Book. This is called a receiving of "spiritual communion." It is often helpful to say to persons who are ill that the Extreme Unction service is precautionary and tell them they will receive Communion and regular Unction in subsequent visits.

If a person has died and a family member asks a priest to do a service of Extreme Unction I recommend that you agree. It isn't the best theology, but it is pastorally comforting. I once did Extreme Unction in a coroner's office two days after a person died. This person's mother remains most appreciative for my agreeing to her request.

Funerals

Make no mistake about it, funerals are an opportunity for evangelism. When you do a good job conducting the service, when you have helped the family, when you preach well, when you take the time to attend a reception after the service to meet new people, you can change lives. More than any other occasion people are focused upon life and death, and Jesus has a lot to say about this. We are an Easter people, and funerals are the best time to proclaim this reality.

Clergy should follow one of the Burial Offices of the Book of Common Prayer. Pay attention to the rubrics on pages 468 or 490 of the Prayer Book. Also it is helpful in working with family members to have them look at the note on page 507 of the Prayer Book. Burial can be from a church, a funeral home, a cemetery, or at sea. In a church the Paschal Candle is a focal point.

On receiving the body just prior to the beginning of the service, use the prayers at the close of Ministration at the Time of Death—Prayer Book page 466, Reception of the Body. Throughout

the service and until the body is placed back in the funeral hearse, the body is in the officiant's care. Guard it as your possession. Stay near it at all times.

Eulogies, reflections, or words of remembrance by family members can take place at a point in the service determined by the celebrant. My own preference is after the second reading although many clergy prefer lay speaking just prior to the homily. I do not recommend inviting anyone and everyone to speak unless it is a very small service. If a family member is not accustomed to public speaking he or she should use a printed text. Emphasize brevity—three to four minutes. This is especially needed if several people are going to speak.

Burials at sea are rare today, even for Navy personnel. You may be asked to conduct a committal service on a lake—especially Lake Superior. There are two things you need to remember in this circumstance. First, go to the fantail or stern of the vessel to commit the ashes to the deep. If there is a wind or breeze make sure the vessel is pointed in a direction so the ashes will blow to the water and not back in your face or on the vessel. Second, have someone throw a wreath in the same location. This wreath should be of vine and all natural products—no plastic. The wreath becomes a focal point for the remainder of the committal service.

Cremation is an acceptable alternative to traditional burial. Memorials (no body or ashes present) are also appropriate. I ask that clergy discourage family members from dividing ashes. When ashes are present, they should be placed on a stand close to the Paschal Candle and covered with a communion pall. This should be done before the service begins or the celebrant can process into the church with the ashes and pall. As with a full casket, you should include the commendation portion of the service when ashes are present. At the close of the Burial Office carry the ashes and pall out of the church. As with the full body, the ashes are your possession.

There may be occasion when before a service you have to transfer ashes from a cardboard box to a parish owned urn. In this case open the bag with scissors or a knife and check the identification tag. After transferring the ashes to the urn, rinse the tag and all of the plastic bag. Have the water go down a piscina or to a special area of church grounds. Use the same procedure when you are rinsing the urn after ashes have been placed in the ground.